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"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM  
YEAR TO YEAR."

# All the Year Round

a  
Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED

"HOUSEHOLD WORDS"

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# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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"HOUSEHOLD WORDS"

No. 353. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 1875.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

## HALVES.

BY JAMES PAYN,

AUTHOR OF "LOST SIR MASSINGERD," "A PERFECT TREASURE," "AT HER MERCY," &c. &c.

### CHAPTER XV. NEW TERMS.

"WHAT are you doing, I say, in my room?" inquired its proprietor, for the second time, of the unhappy John, who, still standing on the chair, exhibited almost as piteous a spectacle as when threatened with immediate extinction by the jaws of Fury.

"John is here, Mr. Alexander, by my directions," interposed Mrs. Raeburn, who with great presence of mind had already dismissed the servants from the scene. "I take the whole responsibility of his presence on my shoulders."

"I should have concluded as much, madam, had you not confessed it," observed brother Alec, drily. "It still remains, however, for you to explain why you sent him."

To look at them, and hear them speak, these two persons might have been said to have changed characters since their last meeting, save that it was as impossible for Mrs. Raeburn to be mild as for brother Alec to be insolent: her manner was deprecating almost to cringing, though the effort that it cost her to be so showed like a strong limb through a flimsy garment, while that of her brother-in-law was contemptuously stern. It was as though Goneril, after all her cruelties, had suddenly discovered that her father's abdication was invalid, and King Lear had come to his own again, not with triumph, indeed—far from it; with broken hopes, and a wounded heart—but with

full knowledge of the baseness of his kindred.

"My explanation, Mr. Alexander, of John's presence here is simple enough. When you left us this morning so suddenly, to our extreme distress and dismay, we knew not what to think. We were all consumed with apprehension, lest, resenting an imputation for which I alone was to blame, and which I regret above measure, as being utterly false and unfounded, you might have taken some desperate step. For my part, I honestly confess that I feared you had left the Priory for ever. Under those circumstances, I thought it my duty to place all your effects under lock and key, until such time as it might suit you to send for them."

"But my desk, madam, was under lock and key—at least when I left it this morning. It is now open, I perceive; and your son has possessed himself of a portion of its contents. It is curious that I, though absent, am able to offer, you see,"—here he looked round upon the family circle, which, I now noticed for the first time, had an addition to it in the person of my uncle Hastings—"a more complete solution of this proceeding than Mrs. Raeburn herself. Moved by suspicions of her own, or by information received from others, with respect to my possession of property, she resolved to convince herself of the fact by an examination of my private papers."

"Dear me, dear me, I hope not," said the rector, jingling the silver in his pocket, as he was wont to do when perturbed in mind. "You must take care what you say in your excitement, my dear friend; you must really take care."

"Look at the lady's face, and judge for yourself, Hastings," answered the other, coolly; "or look at this," and stepping forward, he plucked from John Raeburn's hand the paper it still mechanically grasped. "This is a statement of my property as at present invested—a document which had, doubtless, a very great interest for some of my relatives here, and which it is a pity, for their own sakes, that they did not obtain a sight of earlier." Bitter as was the old man's tone, it still spoke less of bitterness than of an inflexible purpose; and the stress that he had laid upon the words, "at present," had a significance it was impossible to misunderstand.

"I leave the Priory to-day, with my good friend the rector, here——"

"I am sorry for it, Alec," interrupted the attorney, speaking for the first time; "genuinely sorry, but not surprised. We have deserved it."

"You are right, Mark," answered the other, sternly, "and you are the one to blame. Your wife acted according to her nature; we do not look for gentleness in the wolf, or mercy in the wild-cat——"

"Pon my life, sir, I can't stand this," interposed the rector, vehemently; "you put me in a cold perspiration. I promised you, as a matter of friendship, and in hopes to be the means of reconciliation between you and your family, to accompany you hither, and afterwards elsewhere; but I must go away if you use—dear me!—such very extraordinary language."

"I have done, Hastings, with invectives; and I am sorry I indulged in them in your presence; I owe it to you to make your position here as painless and unembarrassing as I can. I was about to say, Mark, that you, whose nature, as I used to know it, is kind and genial, have been most to blame, since you have permitted it to be warped by another; since you have looked on with folded hands, while wrong and insult were heaped upon one, who had a claim upon you for protection, such as even this dog here would scarcely have ignored. However, I am not here to reproach you. I am come, accompanied by my good friend here, to set forth my future intentions, without possibility of mistake on either side, and also—of this, too, you may be quite certain—without hope of change. I have brought Mr. Hastings to be a witness to them; and I wish, besides, that all those who have

been acquainted with my treatment in this house"—here his voice failed him for the first time—"should also be present. Shall we adjourn to the drawing-room, madam, or may I have my say out here?"

"You may do just as you please, sir," answered Mrs. Raeburn—her face had grown deadly pale, and now and again she moistened her thin lips with her tongue, like one in fever—"this room is good enough for me."

We all six, therefore, remained where we were, in brother Alec's room; he himself standing by the desk, the rifling of which had nearly cost his nephew his life, and now bade fair to lose him his inheritance; John sitting, with disconcerted face, on the arm of the chair, the seat of which his mother filled; and the rest of us standing, with attentive looks, save Mark, who, turning his back upon us all, leant his head upon the chimney-piece, and listened without sign.

"I am not about to speak of late events," commenced the old man in a firm voice, "and still less of that far-back past, Mark, the remembrance of which was once so dear to me. I will not utter one word of reproach, for some hearts here feel already self-reproach, I see, and others no words of mine can move. But, in my own defence, I must needs say that I did not return to my native land with any idea of putting your affection to the proof; I had no doubt of its genuineness, no fear of its shortcoming whatever. But not knowing even whether you were still alive, I kept the same feigned name upon the voyage which I had always borne in Peru, so that, in case I had found you dead, and that you had left offspring, I might, without making known to them the fact of my relationship, until I saw fit to do so, judge of their characters for myself, and make up my mind in what proportion they should severally inherit my wealth. It was a foolish fancy, doubtless, and bitterly have I paid for it, since, if I had shipped under my own name, the fact of the fortune I had acquired in Peru would probably soon have come to your knowledge, and I should never have suspected that it was my riches alone that had evoked your welcome."

"Mr. Alexander is taking a very morbid view of human nature," observed Mrs. Raeburn, looking towards the rector with a sickly smile.

But my uncle, with all his gallantry and disposition to make matters pleasant,

moved not a muscle in encouragement, while brother Alec continued, as though no interruption had taken place.

"When I found, to my great joy, that you were alive, Mark, and still in the very place where we had grown up together from childhood, I came home impatient to embrace you, leaving my luggage and other property in town. This was another circumstance which tended eventually to mislead you as to my true position; but, as I tell you, it was wholly undesigned. When I reached this house, Heaven is my witness that I had no thought of any concealment of the state of my affairs. I was almost grieved—so tenderly I felt towards you—to find you prosperous, since the property I designed to at once make over to you, in accordance with our agreement—the half, that is, of my whole estate—would not prove so acceptable to you as though you had been in greater need of it. But I had not been an hour under your roof, when, on the part of one member of this family at least, I began to suspect the genuineness of the welcome that had been accorded to me. Even when I became convinced of this, however, it did not alter my intentions. This person, I reflected, was not connected with me by ties of kindred; if only my brother's arms were held open to me, that should be sufficient. I remembered how they had clasped me to his breast when we had parted years ago; they were still of the same flesh and blood as then. Let me not, however, inflict unnecessary pain. It is enough to say that I began to have my doubts of you, yourself, Mark; and I resolved to try you. If you had acknowledged our agreement, even though you had excused yourself from fulfilling the obligation it involved; if you had expressed to me your sense of the indignities that were heaped upon me, when it appeared that I was poor, and had acknowledged your powerlessness to prevent them, that would have been something, and I should have forgiven the rest." Here the speaker's voice trembled so excessively that he was compelled to pause; and Mrs. Raeburn took advantage of the circumstance to introduce an observation.

"When speaking of putting my husband on his trial, Mr. Alexander, you have omitted to state that you accomplished this by means of a deception. You told us that you were wealthy, and then acknowledged that you were poor. It was your duplicity, not your poverty, that

turned me against you. Since Mr. Hastings is your listener, it is but right that he should understand that there was a reason for my change of conduct. He should be made acquainted with all the facts—if with any."

"Madam, if I conceal anything from Mr. Hastings of what has happened here," returned brother Alec, coldly, "it is for Mark's sake. As to telling you that I was wealthy, I deny it. Your greedy wish was father to that thought."

"You said that the ropes and tackle of that box of silver had held firm, when you knew all the time that the bottom had come out," cried Mrs. Raeburn, reproachfully.

"I do not pretend, madam, that I took any pains to deceive you in the matter. And I will own that, when I discovered your utter heartlessness, I did deceive you. Let us not, however, waste time in recriminations. I will proceed at once to the business that has brought me back this morning. This paper, about which your son John yonder has shown himself so curious, is, as I have said, Mark, the statement of my property, as at present invested—about one hundred thousand pounds."

A shock seemed to pervade Mrs. Raeburn's system, as though she had incautiously laid hold of an electric-eel.

"The loss of the box of silver bars, which happened as I have described, was serious; but"—and here there was for the first time a touch of malice in the speaker's tone—"it was not the only box. Well, I call you all to witness that every shilling of my fortune, with the exception of a small proportion of it, which will never come to you, Mark, nor to any member of your family, I am about at once to invest in a life annuity. This resolve of mine, which is unalterable, must needs include Gertrude here, which I regret; but I am happy to think that she has a fortune of her own, which renders the matter of less consequence."

For my part, I thought this very unjust and harsh. Gertrude had always behaved towards the old man with affectionate solicitude, and had even been led into contention—a thing most repugnant to her nature—with her hostess, solely upon his account; and now the Raeburns had offended him, he must needs include her also, because she happened to be a relative of theirs, in the same sweeping condemnation. A tinge of heightened colour stole into the dear girl's cheeks at the mention of her name, but a quiet smile was her

only answer. To my great surprise, however, Mrs. Raeburn spoke up for Gertrude.

"You will do as you please, Mr. Alexander, with your own, of course; and though your displeasure with me and mine is most unreasonable, good taste forbids me to make any remonstrances; but, with regard to your cousin, she has always been your friend, and, indeed, I may say, has been devoted to you——"

"Mrs. Raeburn," interposed Gertrude with dignity, "I must beg of you to make no appeal to cousin Alec upon my account. As he very justly observes, I am in no want of his money, and whatever service I have been able to do him, was done, as he is well aware, without hope or wish for reward."

"Quite right! quite right!" assented the old man, coldly. "If Gertrude had been of that sort, she should have been duly recompensed."

The words "that sort," uttered, I must say, in a very contemptuous tone, appeared possibly to Mrs. Raeburn to have some personal significance; or, perhaps, now that all hope of reconciliation with her brother-in-law seemed to have died out, she saw no reason for repressing any longer the lava-tide of wrath that was pent up within her.

"And so, sir, you have only come back to us to spit out your malice, and have brought Mr. Hastings with you in order to be a witness to our humiliation. From you, that is no more than I should have expected; but as to the rector, here——"

"Madam, madam," interposed my uncle with nervous vehemence, "you are altogether wrong. If I had known that your brother-in-law would have said so much, I would have seen him—I mean I would certainly not have made one of your family party on this occasion. But, indeed, he has quite another object than that of vituperation.—Why the deuce don't you come to it, Alec?"

For the first time throughout this scene, which had certainly not been destitute of ludicrous situations, I saw a grin relax John's muscles; the rector's manifest discomfort and irritation would, indeed, if the circumstances had been less serious, have been the very height of comedy.

"You are right, Hastings, and I apologise to you for having let my tongue run when I promised to be silent," said brother Alec, frankly. "And you, madam, would, I admit, have just cause for complaint, if my mission here were only to re-

proach you. I came, however, to make a proposition, which, as it will certainly have its advantages for you, you will probably accept. Though rich, I am, alas! homeless; and it is my wish, notwithstanding all that has happened here, to still reside under this roof."

It was not only Mrs. Raeburn who started this time; an electric shock seemed to pass through the whole circle, with the exception of the rector, who had been already informed of the suggestion, and to whom, also, it would not appear so strange as it did to us, who had been witnesses to the treatment of our guest at the Priory. The attorney was most moved of all, and turned upon his brother a face full of tender surprise.

"This proposition, if accepted, will, however, no matter how it may be carried out, in no way affect the disposition of my property," continued the other, firmly, as if in answer to this look. "Being myself necessarily ignorant of the cost of English housekeeping, I have made inquiries upon the matter, and am informed that one thousand pounds would be a handsome annual allowance for a person in my position to allow for his maintenance in a fitting way, and I propose to pay that sum."

"Very liberal, I am sure," muttered Mrs. Raeburn, approvingly, but looking with great disfavour at my uncle.

My impression is, that she credited him with having estimated the cost of his friend's keep at the amount in question, with which, large as it was, she was dissatisfied; whereas my excellent relative was utterly uninformed upon such matters, and would probably have declined the post of arbitrator in any case. The fact was, as I afterwards discovered, that my aunt had been appealed to, and suggested five hundred a year as ample, and that brother Alec had doubled it.

"Then I am to understand that this arrangement meets your views, madam?" continued he. "Mrs. Raeburn is the housekeeper, and therefore I appeal to her, Mark," he added apologetically; to which the attorney only answered with a feeble smile. In his brother's presence it would have been idle indeed for him to have laid claim to domestic authority.

"The arrangement is satisfactory, Mr. Alexander," replied Mrs. Raeburn. "Most satisfactory, I am sure, to us; not only upon pecuniary grounds——"

"Those are the grounds alone on which I wish it to be transacted, madam," inter-



rupted her brother-in-law, sternly. "Let us consider, then, this business settled. I shall go to town this morning, but shall probably return to-morrow, or the next day, to take up my residence here. Hastings"—here he pulled out his watch—"we have not much time to spare before the train starts; if you will wait for me below-stairs while I pack up a few things, I will be with you in ten minutes."

At this hint we all withdrew from the apartment; but as I was going out last, the old man touched my arm.

"Will you help me to fill my carpet-bag, Sheddon?"

Of course I assented, though I was surprised at the request, for brother Alec was singularly independent of such assistance, and even in his palmy days had rarely summoned a servant for any purpose. When the door had closed upon the others, however, and I saw him sink into his accustomed chair, very white and trembling, it was easy to guess why he needed help. The previous scene, for which he had summoned all his strength, had completely exhausted him.

"Dear Mr. Raeburn," said I, "you are very unwell, and quite unfit, as it seems to me, for a long day's travel."

"No, no, lad, I shall do," said he, rousing himself with effort, and pointing out the few articles he wished put up.

I obeyed his directions; yet, really apprehensive of what might occur, again requested him to remember his debilitated condition.

"At least," said I, "put off your departure for to-day, Mr. Raeburn."

"Not I, lad," answered he, firmly. Then added, with a smile, "It would be hardly safe to stay under this roof with Mark's wife, with my will unsigned, and while Mark is my heir-at-law."

He spoke in jest, but there was a bitterness in his tone that made it half earnest, and gave his hearer a shudder.

#### THE DEAD CITIES OF THE ZUIDERZEE.

YOUNG people never entertain a suspicion that, one of these days, they will be changed into old people. "All men think all men mortal but themselves." The prosperous and over-crowded town naturally concludes, from what it sees, that it will always remain busy and populous. Of the existence of the past we have undeniable proofs; we acknowledge to have had an-

cestors: but can we realise the present's, nay, the future's, ever becoming ancient history? Shall we, by the lapse of time, be fossilised into ancestors ourselves? Human nature shuts its eyes and turns its deafest ear, while reason and logic answer in unison "Yes."

And yet—and yet—the mighty geological changes which we admit to have been effected by the continuous action of slight unheeded causes, might suggest that the fortunes of a country, as well as its geographical aspect, may gradually alter with the lapse of ages. Nevertheless, they fail to impress us with that very unwelcome possibility, although local prosperity varies much more rapidly than any material transformation of localities, which is not brought about by a sudden catastrophe. Not one, for instance, of the thronging inhabitants of Hoorn, or Enkhuizen, or Stavaren, surmised, a hundred years ago, that, in 1874, M. Henry Havard would print, with spirited etchings of their "monuments," his *Voyage aux Villes Mortes du Zuiderzee*, which we beg to recommend to our readers' perusal.

Human lives, though short, are still long enough to witness the birth, the mature vigour, the decrepitude, and death of many plants and animals. The rise and fall of nations and races; the foundation, prosperity, and decay of cities, demand greater longevity for us to observe them in our own proper persons. Important topographical revolutions are mostly effected still more slowly. Holland presents us with those events compressed into an unusually short space of time.

The Zuiderzee is of quite recent formation. It is the very youngest sea in Europe, not having acquired its full development until the close of the thirteenth century. When the Romans penetrated into these northern wilds, the present vast gulf was covered with dense forests. Bears and wolves disputed with man whatever game might lurk within them. In the midst of all was a great lake, the Flevo, mentioned by Tacitus, communicating with the sea by a river, which was called by the Romans Flevum, and which, perhaps, is the Medemelach of the Frisons, but whose course it is now impossible to trace. The lake, swollen by the rivers Amstel and Yssel (especially after Drusus Nero had diverted into the latter a portion of the Rhine waters), burst its bounds, converted woods into swamps, and soon became the Zuiderzee.



On its shores then arose many flourishing towns, which speedily acquired great influence and wealth, but which now are merely skeleton cities. This curious and interesting spectacle induced M. Henry Havard, in company with an artist friend, M. Van Heemskerck Van Beest, to undertake the circumnavigation of the Zuiderzee—a voyage which has not been performed by ten people in Holland, and probably by not one single writer, artist, tourist, or antiquary. They determined to visit ancient capitals, such as Medemblik and Stavoren, before the grass has grown over their ruins and their names are effaced from the map of the Netherlands.

The Dutch themselves are indifferent to most things that do not directly concern their interests. The dead towns of the Zuiderzee are unmistakably defunct; and, as there is little hope of bringing them to life again, they are inscribed with the gravestonemotto, "Requiescant in pace." Travelers not animated by the true explorer's fire are deterred by special difficulties. The navigation of the Zuiderzee is far from being safe or easy. Mynheer Van Dunck's draughts of brandy and water "as deep as the Zuiderzee" made a shallow mistake in the simile adopted. On beholding that vast sheet of water in an ordinary map, you fancy you may run before the wind in any direction, but a good chart shows things under a different aspect. Shoals upheave themselves right and left, leaving between them a barely practicable way. A channel, fourteen, fifteen, sometimes twenty feet deep, is skirted by an enormous "zandbank," covered with often only one foot of water. The consequences of a squall or a slight mistake in steering are unpleasantly evident. The history of the Zuiderzee abounds in stories of shipwrecks, which are tragically illustrated by great carcasses of vessels seen here and there overtopping the waves, until they gradually fall piecemeal into ruin.

As there are no regular communications by water between the different points of the coast, the tourist must engage for his own use a bark drawing very little water, yet big enough to cook and sleep in, to hold provisions, and above all water, sufficient for a month; for nothing except bread and a few fresh vegetables can be reckoned on at the places visited. Nor are competent schippers easy to find. The shipping regulations tend to confine them to certain portions of the coast, and they

dislike to go out of their usual bounds. There are sailors who are born and die on the Zuiderzee, without having once been round it.

Through Van Heemskerck's assiduous search, a boatman named Sluring, a strict Protestant, was induced to say, "With God's assistance, and a good wind, we will manage to effect the voyage. I only make two conditions—to be judge of weather, that is, not to be obliged to go to sea in a storm; and, not to work on Sundays." As they went to see the country, and not to brave the elements, his terms were accepted. The modest but sufficient crew consisted of the schipper, his wife, one child, and one sailor. Sluring and his knecht were both young and active. The latter was lodged in a little hole in front; the master and his family occupied the chamber at the stern, where they spent their entire existence afloat, rarely going on shore, and never sleeping there, but always returning at night to their aquatic dwelling, which they preferred to the finest terra-firma mansion. The middle of the tjalk was divided, by old tapestry, into three apartments, the first of which, styled parlour and dining-room, was furnished with a carpet, four chairs, and a mahogany table. Unlike the cobbler of the ditty, the travelers had also kitchen and bedroom, the latter containing two smooth planks luxuriously spread with horsehair mattresses.

M. Havard possesses the talent of making a picture out of subjects that would drive ordinary sketchers to despair. What can a writer or an artist do with a horizon as flat as the distant sea, and a dead level foreground of pasture land? M. Havard shows what can be made of them. When most people would say there is absolutely nothing to paint or to describe, he sets that nothing before you in all its individuality; he causes you to see the absence of features which give their charm to other landscapes, and makes you half satisfied with the verdant monotony and the sluggish waters, which are the happy home of proud and contented millions. It is not his fault if the original is flat and tame, unprepossessing at first sight, and wearisome on long acquaintance. He gives you all; he can no more. But not every tourist has the skill to present you with an original so difficult to handle and to reproduce.

One Monday morning they started, according to agreement, and were at once rewarded by the magnificent spectacle of Amsterdam seen from the Ij. A great

black band outspreads itself beneath a grey-blue sky of indescribable softness; twenty thousand gable-ends seem to bite the sky, and towers and steeples proudly raise their belfries adorned with black balustrades and joyous chime-bells. To the right the Lutheran Church displays its corpulent dome; in the centre, the royal palace heaves its heavy cupola; on either side, slim and graceful spires point heavenwards, overtopping city churches which have renounced saintly names to take the commonplace titles of North and South Church, Old or New Church. In the foreground a rank of long and lean houses squeezing, crowding, and pushing against each other, show their brown faces, and, with their thousand windows framed in white, inquisitively stare at the great gulf which made the fortune of this singular city. The pressure of their weight on the piles which support them, slightly deranging their perpendicularity, gives them the air of a row of tipsy soldiers. The tall trees, which shade their granite doorsteps, protect them with a rampart of verdure, at whose foot groups of loungers and sailors stroll to and fro, while merchants, clerks, and port-officials pursue their diverse occupations.

Little by little the scene recedes, the houses become telescopic, the men invisible, the colours fade, the noise ceases. The bright tints melt gently into a blueish cloud. Here and there the steeples still reflect a ray of light, but their outlines are lost in a pearl-grey mist. Our ancestors have admired this spectacle, but our grandchildren will hardly know it; for shortly, in the place of this liquid plain, black and white cattle will graze, up to their knees in grass. A modest canal will replace this little sea, and the IJ, drained by modern skill, will exist only in our memories.

Along the Zuiderzee they thread their way, skirting its banks, interminably flat and green, whose striking sameness is only broken by scattered steeples pricking up from the plain, or windmills resting their weary sails. These eternal green levels, stretching out of sight, impress and at the same time lull the mind. In presence of an everlasting horizontal line, one has neither the inclination to think nor the strength to act. All other feelings are becalmed by an objectless but overpowering dreaminess, until Marken Island appears in the horizon; that is, the tops of its houses and the steeple of its church, for the ground is not yet visible. Then

uprise small villages perched on slight eminences, and then the whole island, like an immense green raft drifting over a dull-grey sea. Then, the intensely bright hues of the houses stand out strongly against the light blue sky. Black, red, and green—their most striking notes—acquire, by close contiguity, a strength which almost amounts to loudness.

What a joy for the artist is this natural colouring! And how easy, on witnessing it, to understand that Holland should have produced such eminent colourists! In fact, every inhabitant seems endowed with an intuitive sense of the harmony of hues. The houses, often painted with very violent contrasts, are still agreeable to the eye. In the utensils employed in ordinary life, the oppositions of tints are contrived with infinite skill. Thus, the milk-tubs are always painted blue, which brings out the whiteness of the milk; the pails for drawing water from the canals are red inside, which conceals the yellowish tinge of the water; the boats are decorated with green, red, and black, so well disposed as to show each other off to the best advantage. In one instance only did M. Havard find this instinct of the Dutch at fault. In an infirmary for children (at Enkhuizen) the little beds had yellow curtains!

For Marken, its customs and costumes; how M. Havard got on the right side of the children, and, through them, of their mothers (the fathers were all out fishing in the Zuiderzee), the reader must refer to his book. We merely observe that Marken would find it difficult to adopt a protective commercial policy. Native industry works—hard enough—within such narrow limits that, without free trade, it would be in a fix, having little besides flat-fish and hay to offer in return for furniture, clothing, for most of its food, beer, and even bread. Consequently, it would not be easy to demonstrate the merits of high import duties to a Markenar. Finally, at Marken births are numerous and deaths of agreeably rare occurrence. People of eighty are frequent enough to excite the hope that one may one day belong to that venerable fraternity.

Marken is neither dead nor dying; but higher up the Zuiderzee, Hoorn is charming in decay. After doubling the pier which, curved like a horn, gave, some say, its name to the town; after passing the big tower which commands the ancient port, you land on the brink of a delicious basin surrounded with verdure, trees, and

flowers. But the spot now covered by this bright vegetation was once occupied by ship-building dockyards, whence issued a fleet of vessels every year.

Hoorn is entirely ancient. All its houses are old coquettes, covered with pleasing carvings and pretty bas-reliefs, with a pointed roof tapering off in steps. They stoop a little, in order to see and to be seen the better. Everywhere projecting eaves, flights of granite steps, carved wood, and sculptured stone, varied by warm-tinted ruddy brick, give the dwellings an aspect of cheerful freshness which contrasts strangely with their age and their antique forms. And not merely two, nor ten, nor twenty houses are thus decorated. All are alike, from the first to the last, from one end of the town to the other. It seems absurd to walk about such streets in modern costume. There are places that ought to be visited in hat and feather, high boots, and a rapier at one's side. Hoorn is one of them.

Nevertheless, the view is not obstructed by the crowd. Passengers are distressingly scarce; and the broad deserted streets, leading one out of the other, all empty and inanimate, would be greatly improved by an increase of residents. And yet Hoorn once contained a busy and redundant population who covered the seas with their fleets, and studded the East with their factories. Every week its market was invaded by more than a thousand waggons, bringing mountains of cheese; every year its cattle-fair, founded in 1389, attracted multitudes of strangers from every corner of Europe. Hoorn then could number twenty-five thousand inhabitants. It is now reduced to a bare ten thousand, although its limits still remain the same, and its aspect is still superb, thanks to the massive towers and monumental gates that have survived the ancient ramparts.

When De Ruyter swept the North Sea with a broom at his mast-head, his squadron contained a certain number of vessels equipped by the town of Hoorn. Hoorn once possessed ten large churches, most of which still exist, but are no longer used for public worship. The oldest and the vastest, the Groote Kerk, built in 1369, adorned with great magnificence and enriched with a piece of the true cross, was destroyed by fire in 1833. Hoorn gave birth to Abel Janszoon Tasman, the discoverer of New Zealand and Van Diemen's Land; to Jan Pietersz Keen, who, in 1619, founded Batavia; and to Wouter Corneliszoon Schouten,

who, in 1616, first doubled the extreme point of South America, and gave it the name of Cape Hoorn in memory of his native town. Besides these intrepid navigators, Hoorn reckons amongst her children a good number of doctors and learned men, whose names, latinised in "us" after the fashion of the day, have fallen into complete oblivion. Their fame has shared the fortune of their birthplace; which was brought so low as to be unable to supply our travellers with a scrap of fresh meat. A leg of veal was indeed discovered hanging in the principal butcher's shop; but it was reserved to feast a neighbouring and still more decadent city.

This is Enkhuizen, which has altogether outlived itself. Nor has it been long-lived—eight or nine centuries old; no more. About the year 1000, in the time of Count Thierry the Third, a few houses (*enkele huizen*) were built on this tongue of land, which is a peninsula stretching out of another peninsula. Where sixty thousand active and industrious inhabitants once contributed to the wealth and power of Holland, you can now scarcely muster five thousand souls. The port which sent out a thousand ships, at present owns fewer than the island of Marken. The silent streets are too wide for the scanty passengers, and whole quarters have disappeared. If you stroll through this deserted city with a resident who knows its history, he will tell you, while you gaze at its tumble-down houses, "This was once a rich and busy quarter; those mansions belonged to our aristocracy, one of the wealthiest in the world."

But the most touching spectacle is where the houses finish. You think the bounds of the town are reached; nothing of the kind. Ever so far off, out in the country, a city-gate is standing. A century ago, up to that gate, houses were crowded one against the other. To reach it now is a twenty-minutes' walk through pasture land, in which grass grows almost as thick as in the polders.\* Sheep are

\* Polders are lakes or meers which have been drained, and thereby brought into cultivation as pasture land. These pastures are intersected by ditches which serve for further drainage, subdivision, and water carriage. Polders are a specially artificial result. In other countries the emptying of a lake is an operation whose duration and expense are limited; the thing is done once for all. But in Holland the difficulty consists, not in opening an outlet for the water, but in preventing water from entering, and in pumping out what falls from the skies, or rises from springs, by means of machines or windmills, which must be constantly at work. The former Sea of Haarlem is now a vast and productive polder.

feeding, and cows chewing the cud, where human passions have had their full swing. The plain is an immense cemetery, but void of crosses, coffins, or monuments; a vast common grave, an enormous charnel-house, in which lie interred pell-mell the pleasures of the rich and the labour of the poor, the industry of the artist and the artisan. And yet a hundred and fifty years ago it was populous, full of streets and houses, shops and churches, crowded with men striving to forward the Republic's interest at the same time as their own, proud of their liberty, rejoicing in their power.

In the Government warehouses, which still exist, is perhaps the most considerable manufactory of buoys in Europe; which is explained by the circumstance that no spot in the world makes greater use of them than the *Zuiderzee*. There are ancient tapestries at *Enkhuizen*, and pictures, notably one magnificent specimen of *Ferdinand Bol* in the burgomaster's cabinet. Those in the *Stadhuys* illustrate the way in which the Dutch language lends itself to puns, double meanings, and mistakes.

A gentleman asked the burgomaster's permission to copy a picture in the aforesaid town-hall. Leave was given, and the doorkeeper was informed that a painter, who would be there next morning with his easel, was to be shown into the Marriage Chamber. Now easel and ass are the same, "*ezel*," in Dutch. The old fellow, who had never seen an easel in his life, wondered what a painter could possibly want with a donkey in the room where civil marriages were contracted. All that night he got no sleep, through horror at the monstrous introduction. Nevertheless, he resolved to obey without grumbling or asking impertinent questions; but, as a precautionary measure, he covered the floor with a litter of straw.

Dutch humour, however, finds opportunities of exercising itself independently of verbal equivocations. *M. Havard* and his friend, while hunting out the local curiosities at *Hoorn*, asked an honest-looking fellow if he could direct them to any remarkable old things, to antiquities of any sort, which were not known to the generality of strangers.

"Antiquities, old things?" he said, after a minute's deep reflection. "You have only to go to the end of that street, and you will find exactly what you want."

They followed his advice, and found themselves in front of the Old Women's Hospital.

### A FEW ODD PLEAS.

*BROUGHAM*, defending a rogue charged with stealing a pair of boots, unable to gainsay his client's guilt, demurred to his conviction because the articles appropriated were half-boots, and half-boots were no more boots than a half-guinea was a guinea, or half a loaf a whole one. The objection was overruled by Lord *Estgrove*, who, with befitting solemnity, said: "I am of opinion that boot is a *nomen generale* comprehending a half-boot; the distinction is between a half-boot and half a boot; the moon is always the moon, although sometimes she is a half-moon." Had *Brougham* proved the boots to be old ones, his man would probably have come off as triumphantly as a tramp tried at *Warwick* for stealing four live fowls. The fowls had been "lifted" in *Staffordshire*; still the indictment was declared good, it being held that a man committed felony in every county through which he carried stolen property; but when it came out in evidence that the fowls were dead when the thief was taken, he was at once set free, on the ground that he could not be charged with stealing four live fowls in *Warwickshire*. Such hair-splitting was common in the good old days—not such very old days either—when the law compounded for its cruelty, by providing plenty of loopholes for the escape of offenders. It has mended its ways since, but all the holes are not yet stopped. In the matter of embezzlement, for instance, such nice distinctions are drawn, that theft is not always theft, but sometimes merely helping oneself to one's own. Liberal as our judges are in defining what is a man's own, they have not gone quite so far as their Neapolitan brethren, who directed the acquittal of a knavish rent-collector, because the money belonged to the people, and as the collector was one of the people he was part-owner of the money, and could not be punished for stealing what was his own. Law and justice parted company then, as they did when a female receiver experienced the very tender mercy of a Hungarian court. The accused, a woman owning to forty-four, did not attempt to combat the evidence, but simply pleaded infancy. Just six months before, she had renounced Judaism and been baptised a Christian, and as in Hungary the date of baptism is taken as the date of birth, she contended that she was only six months



old in the eyes of the law. The bench agreed with her, and the ingenious infant was set at liberty, licensed to set all laws at defiance for a score of years.

Ladies with a Euthanasian mission, and philosophers holding that suicide may be a duty, and murder a meritorious deed, should betake themselves to the land of the Magyars if they pine to be appreciated. A year or two ago one Esaba, a shoemaker, killed his sister-in-law. The girl had won him from her sister, and the injured wife, upon discovering how affairs stood, left her home in righteous wrath; whereupon this faithless shoemaker went out and bought a revolver, wherewith to end his life and domestic trouble together. While he was gone, the frail cause of all took poison, and when Esaba came home to carry out his resolve, he found her writhing in agony on the floor. Horrified at the sight of her sufferings, the shoemaker shot his paramour four times, and finding she still lived, put her out of her pain with an axe. Then he shot himself as ineffectually as he had done the girl, and rushed out of the house to drown himself in a lake hard by, but was baulked by the arrival of the police just in the nick of time. For the murder of his mistress Esaba was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment. This, he thought, was more than he deserved, and he appealed against the sentence to the High Court of Pesth, pleading that the dead woman had poisoned herself past recovery, and he had only used his pistol and axe out of a kind desire to shorten her agony. The court in its wisdom altered the term of imprisonment to three years; although, if it considered his act a charitable one, it is hard to see how it was justified in punishing the man at all. In 1731 a woman of Montagne, France, killed an old man by burning the crown of his head and the soles of his feet, in hopes of thereby breaking a spell he had cast upon her husband; and it was urged in her behalf that she was actuated by conjugal affection—an argument, however, that did not avail with her judges. Still it must be allowed that the superstitious wife was more deserving of sympathy than the self-confessed attempter of Colonel Phayre's life, who, professing to look upon the colonel as his father, laid the blame of his baseness upon his luck: he was predestined to do what he had done, and could not help himself; while the accomplice thought it sufficient to say he was a

poor man, who could not be expected to refuse a bribe. Had the precocious pair ever heard of Fenianism, they might have raised the more specious plea that killing is no murder, if the killing be done to serve a political purpose; like the Frenchman who objected to being condemned to death for murdering his wife and child, because capital punishment for political offences was abolished, and he only executed his relations because they were Legitimists; a plea that proved as ineffectual as the argument of the French advocate, that as his client, by killing his father and mother, had rendered himself an orphan, it was the duty of society to protect the bereaved creature. That interesting orphan was as much to be pitied as the Irishman who, leaving his wife at a public-house, went home and hanged his little son to the lintel of the door, "to frighten his wife out of her bad habits."

Many a man has thought with Proteus, that unheeded vows may heedfully be broken, and has paid smartly for the error. It is not so easy to cry off a matrimonial bargain if the other party concerned refuses an order of release; and when he is compelled to show a jury just cause for the default, the recalcitrant lover is apt to cut a pitiful figure. The pleas put upon the record being mere formal ones, he has to rely upon the excuse devised to mollify the lady; and such excuses are generally very shallow ones. Most defendants, in breach of promise cases, try to shift the responsibility upon somebody else's shoulders. One declines to keep troth because his mother does not altogether approve his choice, and he cannot forsake his parent in her old age; another, after courting a girl openly for sixteen years, finds he had no idea the prejudice his mother had against her was so strong, and filial affection forbids him to run counter to that prejudice; and a third cannot marry against his father's inclinations, the old gentleman inclining, as the girl's lover knew, to take the lady to himself. One young rascal asked his dear Polly to release him from his promise, out of consideration for a grumpy old uncle's objection to receiving a dressmaking girl for a niece; while a cheesemonger's assistant suddenly discovers that his prospects will be blighted by keeping faith with his "spotless dove," it being utterly impossible for him to marry one with whom his friends would not associate, because she was the daughter of a small farmer. More



artful defendants pretend to be actuated by consideration for the lady's welfare; one pleading he is such a ne'er-do-weel that, if he gets any money he can never keep it, and, therefore, is not likely ever to be able to keep a wife; and another discovers, at the last moment, that his love is delicate, and his means insufficient to provide the luxuries a lady under such circumstances would require. Not quite such a lame excuse, as that of the gentleman who declined to ratify his agreement, on account of a bad foot and general debility; and assuredly more reasonable than the extraordinary declaration made in open court by a defendant, that he had broken off his engagement, because the plaintiff took no interest in cricket, and was deficient in conversational powers!

A rough-and-ready fellow brought a ten years' lovemaking to an end with, "Dear Miss,—I write these few lines to say that I don't think you and me should agree if we was to come together. I am generally inclined, and you are the other way, so I beg to be excused." The generous creature had to pay roundly for not discovering the incompatibility before; as did another fickle swain, who, after five years' courtship, found out that he did not love his promised bride as truly as he should do, and as summer had rolled on without throwing additional light and warmth on his affection, and creating a proper attachment, begged to withdraw from the engagement, and counselled the lady to make as little fuss about it as possible, as revenge and retaliation could do no good. We have more sympathy for Mr. John Jackson, who felt compelled to give up fair Miss Bell, because she resented certain freedoms on his part and pitched into him "so effectually and unmercifully, sufficient to curb the zeal of any man," that it set him to thinking the thing "solidly over," and finally impelled him to write to the object of his affections: "I came to the conclusion, first, that you considered my disposon bad and unworthy; second, that you are quite arbitrary and to decisive; third, that we are of diferent religions, therefore I considered it wisdom to forget the acquaintance whatever efort it might cost. I have been in that strain of thoughts ever since the time you might see when you were over there; although I tried, I could not make free, for I always felt restraint when in your presence. This proceeded from my being conscious of having lowered myself in your estimation,

also that you put me down so lo that I cannot com up again.

So from you I must part,  
I make the sacrifice from my heart;  
So farewell Miss Bell,  
Alone I'll dwell.—Yours respectfully,  
JOHN JACKSON."

It is often said that British jurymen are too liberal in awarding damages to disconsolate damsels, and too ready to accept their interpretation of looks, and words, and soft nothings. It may be so, but male flirts might go farther and fare worse. In 1873 Miss Roxalana Homan sued Alexander Earle for breach of promise of marriage, in the court at Brooklyn, New York. The plaintiff admitted there had been neither a written nor a verbal promise, but pleaded that the defendant had kissed her many times, and brought witnesses to prove the fact. The judge told the jury no interchange of words was necessary; the glance of the eye, and the conjunction of the lips, when frequent and protracted, being quite sufficient. The jury gave the lady fifteen thousand dollars.

One Eekhart was brought before a court in Philadelphia for having deserted his wife and family. He did not deny the desertion, but handed in a document setting forth eighteen pleas in extenuation. Two of them alleged infidelity on his wife's part, the others ran thus:—"1. She slaps me four times on the back. 2. Smash the large looking-glass and break over my head. 3. Try's to break my bedroom dore with a haschet, where to see thirteen marks yet. 4. Firert a hot coffee-pot over my head and skall me. 5. She sold my Pluplick-house for two hundred and thirty dollars. I was offered eight hundred dollars. 6. She trit to kill my boy with a flat-iron, fourteen years old. 7. She licked my boy, twelve years old, unmorecefull. 8. Ditto, the little girl seven years old. 9. She drinks very hard. 10. She went to a pluplick-house, treating a party of men four times, and came home drunk, committing assault and battery. 13. She left us for three monts. 14. She breaks all the crockery in the house. 15. She is half-crazy; her sister died in the insane hospital. 16. Not fit taker care of children. 17. A new high hat smash is with a poker. 18. When she commit assault and battery on me, then she runs out and hollows murder, and putn the blame on me." The unhappily-mated man of many pleas avoided weakening his own

case like the duck-stealer, who first said he did not steal the duck; next that he found it; then, that it was given to him; then, that he bought it; then, that his dog picked it up; and, finally, that a policeman put the duck in his pocket. His counsel could not safely adopt any one of his too inventive client's explanations in the face of the other five, so he put the case to the jury thus:—"My unfortunate client has told half-a-dozen different stories as to how he became possessed of this duck. I don't ask you to believe all the stories, but I will ask you to take any one of them." The jury acquitted the prisoner. A Frenchwoman charged before the Tribunal of Correctional Police with singing in the Palais-Royal gardens, and insulting the officers who removed her, ingeniously pleaded that she had a very compassionate heart, and was seized with the idea of singing, in order to get some money to buy cakes for the poor little children she saw around her. Reminded that, as she had above forty francs in her pocket, she had no need to sing, she replied that she was a widow, living upon an irregularly paid pension, and therefore dared not trench upon her purse. As to acting violently, her nervous system had become very irritable, and she was so shocked at being laid hold of by a man, that very probably her tongue pronounced words her principles and education disavowed. Upon hearing herself sentenced, she cried out, "A fortnight's imprisonment! My pension is not paid me. I am not allowed to sing, and I am sent to prison! My nerves can never endure so much—never! never!"

It is pleasant to know that one Englishwoman has achieved her rightful position, without taking to the platform. The husband of this pattern for her sex, appearing to answer a School Board summons, declared it was his earnest wish that his child should go to school; but his domestic arrangements were entirely governed by his wife, who, he was happy to say, governed him. A bigoted magistrate refused to recognise this abdication of masculine prerogative, and told him he must be held responsible, as head of his family, even if his wife ruled him with a rod of iron. More mindful of man's dignity was a sweet-stuff dealer, who pleaded that it was not to be expected that a guardian of the parish was going to serve a farthing's-worth of toffy, when he had got a child to do it. In a similar

predicament an Exeter dame asserted her right to do as she liked with her own children, and vindicated her refusal to send them to the Board school on the ground that, there, children were only taught how to dance and to sing—

Ten little niggers went out to dine,  
One choked his little self, and then there were nine.

The owner of a stolen Bible might reasonably incline to forgive a thief actuated by a godly propensity; but the members of a building society, whose secretary helped himself to twelve thousand pounds, may be excused if they did not resent the robbery the less because the money was spent upon experiments in litho-photography, and in connection with a company for providing public gardens for the people. The outrageous doctrine that "the end justifies the means," stood another rogue in no better stead. He was a baker's man, charged with embezzling twelve pounds of his master's money. Admitting the fact, he pleaded in extenuation that he had laid out every penny upon religious tracts, which he gave away as he went his round, and actually got off with a gentle intimation from the magistrate, that "it was a mistake to take money in a dishonest manner for a religious purpose!" The baker's kind admonisher would have commiserated the poor woman who was "chemicalised by the sewer;" and dealt lightly with the drunk and incapable groundsel-merchant who "got a little drop too much, that got into his head; he got abroad, and then got on the ground;" and the latter who stripped the park-beds of their flowers under the influence of an attack of neuralgia. Nor would he have been hard upon the drunken mail-cart driver, who pleaded that he had only smashed a deal perambulator in his mad rush through a crowded street; and as to the bacon-stealer who averred that the Devil told her to steal the bacon, and she was obliged to obey him, the worthy magistrate would probably have dismissed her with—"My dear woman, you are labouring under a delusion."

A plea, bad in one sense, may be good in another. A man lent another a ladder. After the lapse of a few months he wanted it back again, but the borrower flatly refused to give it up. He thereupon sued him for the value of the ladder. The defendant pleaded that the ladder was borrowed on an express condition—that he was to return it as soon as he had done

with it. He had not done with it, and therefore no action would lie: the plaintiff was nonsuited. Impudence is not always so successful. The court might smile at the burglar's pleading it was so easy to break into country houses, but it sentenced while it smiled; and the Scotch prison-breaker vainly urged that the prison was weak, and he had sent a message to the gaoler that, if he did not get him some more meat, he would not stay another hour. Not a whit more satisfactory was the defence made by an Irish relieving-officer for neglecting to open the polling-booths at the proper time, and for allowing the ballot-papers to be shown about, when he pleaded that the voters had no reason to complain about the non-opening of the booths, since they were equally unready; and, for the other matter, he had acted with the strictest impartiality, and permitted anyone to examine the voting-papers who wished to do so. Even more impertinent was the answer of a Welsh railway company in an action brought by a gentleman for the cost of a conveyance he had taken, after waiting in a station until twenty minutes past one for the departure of a train advertised to start at five minutes past twelve, by which the company contended that punctuality would be inconvenient to the public, and that the plaintiff had no business to trust to their time-tables, as the irregularity of the train-service was notorious. The latter plea was ingenious certainly, but not so daring in its ingenuity as that advanced by certain grocers, who accounted for the presence of iron filings in the tea they sold, by averring that the soil of China was strongly impregnated with iron, and the iron must have been blown upon the leaves before they were gathered—a statement as likely to be credited as that of the thief in Glasgow, who, when stopped by a policeman with, "What have you got in that bundle?" replied, "I have lost my powers of speech, and consequently can't tell you anything about it!"

### UNDER THE HAMMER.

#### FRANKINCENSE AND MYRRH.

ALL the costly cargoes of the navy of Tharshiah, which came but once in three years to King Solomon, would hardly produce a fluctuation in the great market of Mincing-lane, where are to be found "gold and silver, ivory and apes and peacocks" galore. Peacock feathers and monkey

skins we have already viewed, and we need not pause longer in the ivory warehouse than to note that each "tooth" is sawed into three pieces—sold separately—the solid point, or "ball ivory," the hollow but still useful "middle," and the inferior stump of thin poor stuff towards the root: but many potent drugs and precious gums—frankincense and myrrh, spikenard and manna; many fragrant spices—"cinnamon and ginger, nutmegs and cloves;" many costly seeds, anise and cumin, coriander and fenugreek, bear odorous witness of their presence in "the Lane" itself and in the neighbouring warehouses, and well deserve attention. At the great fortnightly drug sales at the Commercial Sale Rooms, in Mincing-lane, and the Corn Exchange Sale Rooms, in Mark-lane, in the warehouses, and at the brokers' offices, where samples are on view, drugs are known by names other than those by which they are recognised by everyday folk. Frankincense, for instance, is known to commerce as gum olibanum. On the rocky shores of Arabia Felix—the kingdom of the Queen of Sheba—and on the limestone hills of the Somali country, this famous gum is collected by the natives, and finds its way to Bombay, and thence to Mincing-lane. Quite recently, the frankincense-tree has been the object of the elaborate and valuable researches of Dr. Birdwood, now curator of the Indian Museum. According to this excellent authority, there are many species or varieties of the frankincense-tree, yielding different qualities of the "lubán," or milky gum, which has, from time immemorial, sent up the smoke of sacrifice from high places. Distinct records have been found of the traffic carried on between Egypt and Arabia in the seventeenth century B.C. In the paintings at Dayr el Báhrî, in Upper Egypt, are representations not only of bags of olibanum, but also of olibanum-trees, planted in tubs, being conveyed by ships from Arabia to Egypt; and among the inscriptions deciphered by Professor Dümichen are several describing shipments of precious woods, heaps of incense, and "verdant incense-trees, brought among the precious things from the land of Arabia, for the majesty of this God Amon, the lord of the terrestrial thrones." The main northerly route, however, of frankincense was not through Egypt. The Sabæans sold their gum to the Arabs, whose caravans carried the precious stuff to Gaza of the Philis-

tines, who reverently burnt some of it before their fish-god, Dagon, and sold the rest—like smart traders—at a good profit. In ancient times it was accepted as tribute, along with silver and gold. Darius, for instance, received from the Arabians an annual tribute of one thousand talents of frankincense. To the London market, gum olibanum comes in barrels; and when of fine quality, appears in detached tears of gum-resin, of a pale yellowish or of a milky hue. It is of no use in medicine, but is entirely reserved for its traditional fate—to form the principal constituent in the incense burned before the altar. The Roman Catholic and Greek churches, and especially the churches of South America, consume an immense quantity of olibanum, as do the Chinese also in their joss-houses. Frankincense accommodates itself to every creed, but in the western world, at least, is rarely burned alone. Marjoram and other herbs are added to it, and also a considerable quantity of gum benzoin, an important item in the drug trade, called in commercial English, gum Benjamin. In the deep forests of Siam grows the unknown tree which produces the finest quality of benzoin. There is plenty of it on view this morning. Great heaps of flattened tears, some of which have agglutinated together, show, by their milky appearance, that the Siam Benjamin is of good quality. In the mouth this fine gum soon becomes soft, and may be “chawed” like mastic. When put into the incense-burner, it soon evolves a powerful fragrance, together with the irritating fumes of benzoic acid—which probably account for the “choky” effect of incense upon many persons. Long before the Siam gum was imported in any quantity, a large trade was carried on in the inferior benzoin of Sumatra, worth about half as much per hundredweight. This is seen in the form of great cubes of solid stuff, like Castile soap in colour and appearance, all trace of the original tears being lost, except where here and there white opaque particles give it the “almondy” look prized by buyers, for the reason that the almondy of the gum reveals the quantity of benzoic acid it contains. The consumption of benzoin in the Greek churches is very great, and a large quantity is also consumed in the East. Like other gums, it is knocked down in Mincing-lane in lots of two or three cases each, at so much per hundredweight. Some keen-looking men

are examining the gum myrrh, offered for sale in cases and bales, and merchants of the good old school are complaining that myrrh is no longer so good as it used to be, and that miserable yellow and brown translucent stuff now takes the place of the fine pink opaque teardrops of former days. A tremendous fuss has always been made about myrrh, which, like many other gums, is a native of the country about the Red Sea. It has been used as a constituent of incense, and contains certain bitter aromatic properties, but, except for making washes for the teeth, is of very little value. Nevertheless, it ranked high in olden times, being an ingredient in the holy oil used in the Jewish ceremonial, as laid down by Moses, and it also formed part of the celebrated Kyphi of the Egyptians, a preparation used in fumigations and embalming. For a long time it was one of those things without which no present from an Eastern to a Western potentate was complete, but it has at last fallen into something like contempt. Next to the myrrh are twenty-one cases of “picked” and many packages of gum Arabic—so called because it grows in Africa and the East Indies. The various qualities are easily distinguished by those to the manner born or made, but are apt to deceive an “outsider” trying to pick out the best gum by the unaided light of his own intelligence. Those fine handsome pieces, large and beautiful, with their yellow or pinky translucency most resembling uncut topaz, are, my friend, gay deceivers, only fit for common “stick-fast,” and will never be raised to the dignity of true druggists’ mucilage, like those little muddy, opaque tears of a dirty white colour. Of somewhat different complexion are the pebbly drops of gum ammoniacum, a Persian product, useful as an expectorant and as an ingredient in plasters, and valuable when in well-defined lumps, from the size of a pea to that of a cherry, but less eagerly bought when the tears have run together—a rule which holds good, by-the-way, of almost all gums; such, for instance, as kino, a valuable astringent, which, when of the best quality, looks like a heap of garnets or carbuncles. Gum elemi, however, is an exception to the rule, generally arriving in a soft state, like old honey. Many other gums, other than those I have enumerated, are sold from time to time in “the Lane,” but are hardly considered medicinal. Chief of those are gum copal, largely used in varnish making; and gum kaurie, a fossil



gum (like amber) dug out of the submerged forests of the antipodes.

Of the medicinal roots on sale, spike-nard, or sumbul root, is a somewhat rare visitor, the musky smell, for which it was highly prized in ancient times, being now supplied by the musk of the musk-deer. This drug arrives in its natural condition in small pouches, packed in tins or caddies, and often horribly adulterated. Downright fictitious musk is also sent to this country, the emptied pouches being refilled with abominable trash concocted for purposes of fraud by the "heathen Chinese" and other child-like orientals. A great quantity of genuine musk, however, comes from Tonquin, from Central Asia, and from the Indian Archipelago. The extraordinary permanence of this perfume is well known. A handkerchief once scented with it may be washed a dozen times and stored away for years, but when taken out the scent of the musk-deer "will cling to it still" and display the power falsely ascribed to the rose. Other instances of the endurance of musk might be given—such as the famous one of the apartments of the Empress Josephine at Malmaison, from which no quantity of scrubbing, painting, and fumigating could remove the subtle penetrating odour. Ambergris, of which sundry tins are for sale, is another curious animal product, a secretion of the sperm whale, still known as a perfume, and sold at a large price in Mincing-lane, but much fallen from its mediæval celebrity as a condiment. We do not care much now for dishes "drenched with ambergris"—truffles being good enough for the gourmands of these degenerate days. Saffron, too, has fallen from its high estate, and is no longer prized as of old as medicine, condiment, perfume, or dye. In the good old times saffron and almond-milk were the sheet-anchors of the "master cooks" of such luxurious monarchs as our Richard the Second; but, except in bouillabaisse and baba cakes, saffron is now rarely met with on our tables. So highly was it esteemed in the middle ages, that tremendous edicts were fulminated against sophisticators of the popular condiment. In Germany—notably at Nuremberg—a Safranschau or saffron inspection was established, and adulterated goods, whether holden "knowingly" or not, were burnt, together with the proprietors. At one time it was largely cultivated around Saffron Walden, in Essex, but the cultivators do not seem to have

made a very good thing of it, judging by the well-known saying, "Saffron Walden—God help you." Another potent condiment greatly used by our forefathers, and still loved by our Indian subjects, is asafetida, with its tremendous odour as of acres of garlic double distilled. Modern Europeans wonder little at the aversion of Horace for the Persian dishes, into which asafetida doubtless largely entered, and conclude that the dainty poet, to whom even garlic was abhorrent, must have been driven from the table by the frightful exhalations of the potent drug, which, in Western countries, is now only used in medicine as a stimulant and antispasmodic. Sweet galangale, now written "galangal," is also a condiment strongly recommended by mediæval cooks—who powdered almost everything with it—but now completely supplanted in the kitchen by ginger. It is, however, imported in large quantities into London, probably for re-exportation, as this Chinese root is much used in Russia by brewers and makers of vinegar and cordials. Old remedies drop out of use in the quickly-moving West, and are supplanted by new. Those things like sausages are the valuable remedies against nervous headache known as Guarana, and those dried flowers are the kousso of commerce—of Abyssinian origin, and the fashionable specific against internal parasites. At the appearance of kousso in the stomach the terrible tapeworm gives up the ghost at once, and relieves patient and physician of what at one time was an almost invincible enemy. Beside two hundred bales of galangal are ranged about a score of Seneca root, once used by the Seneca Indians as a remedy for the bite of the rattlesnake, but now employed in cases of pneumonia, asthma, and rheumatism, and very popular among white people in America. Rhatany root, another Indian remedy, but from South America, is also for sale, and from a native preservative of the teeth and gums has grown into general employment as a powerful astringent. Fifty bags of turmeric quicken the pulse of old Indians who have reduced their livers to a hopeless condition by a prolonged course of curry-eating. Huge quantities of this well-known root are consumed in this country for dyeing and in the manufacture of the thousand-and-one mixtures sold as real "Indian curry powder," many of which, it is fair to state, are quite as good as any imported ready



made from India, the superiority of the curries made there being solely attributable to the freshness of the condiments used. Other ingredients of curry powder are offered for sale in bulk: coriander seeds, with their fragrant smell and aromatic taste; cardamoms, with their hot biting twang; fenugreek, with its spicy flavour, beloved by white men and black, by bipeds and quadrupeds; and cumin, with its strong aromatic taste and smell—not unlike caraway. It is curious that the four last-mentioned seeds are largely used in veterinary practice, and fenugreek especially is employed in flavouring artificial cattle foods.

Caraway is a widely-distributed plant, growing from Morocco to Iceland. It is cultivated in England, but Holland sends our chief supply—some twenty thousand hundredweight annually, devoted mainly to seed cakes, distilled waters, and the manufacture of oil of caraway. Abroad it is applied to a multitude of purposes, as a spice in bread, cakes, cheese, pastry, confectionery, and sauces, and above all as an ingredient of the alcoholic liquid known in Germany as Kümmel, and the famous liqueur now drunk all over the world under the name of Doppel Kümmel, or Alasch. Anise is another historical remedy for human and animal complaints. It is an excellent aromatic stimulant and carminative, and is imported from Southern Russia, the Levant, Northern India, and recently from Chili. Fennel seed, which is of various kinds, is also largely employed in cattle medicines; and outsiders are struck with astonishment at the large quantities of seeds disposed of in "the Lane." Dill, for instance—only connected in the popular mind with a grandmother's remedy called dill-water—is imported in large parcels, and meets with a ready sale.

From these aromatic seeds—suggesting highly-spiced dishes and soothing cordials—it is decidedly unpleasant to turn to the subject of senna, of which several cases of Alexandrian, and many more bales of Bombay, are offered for sale. The finest Alexandrian senna is very carefully picked, and contains only the leaflets of the plant, without stalks, stumps, or other admixture, and, when of a fine greenish colour and unbroken in the leaf, fetches the best price. Bombay senna, another variety of the plant, is chiefly the produce of Arabia, and is shipped from Moka, Aden, and other Red Sea ports to Bombay, and thence to

Europe. It is poor stuff as compared with the Egyptian senna, being collected without care, and full of all sorts of impurities. On the uses of senna I forbear to dilate, and turn from it to contemplate those bags filled with a dried root of nice plump, parsnipy, chumpy appearance—a most valuable root—it is jalap, suggestive of "powders," those loathsome remedies which lie concealed in black-currant jelly, and bring that sweet-meat into disrepute. I have no doubt that black-currant jelly is nice, and that black-currant pudding is excellent to those who never were young, but to me they irresistibly suggest the hideous "powders" of my youth, and produce inevitable nausea. Under the name of Indian rhubarb, jalap was introduced into Europe by the Spanish conquistadores, and is now imported into England at the rate of a hundred and sixty thousand pounds per annum. In scientific works it is described as a "brisk cathartic," having a "mawkish taste, followed by acridity." Mawkish indeed! Ugh! By way of getting through this savoury part of the show as quickly as possible, let us look at the samples of rhubarb. From the earliest times the rhubarb root has been grown in the western provinces of China, and has, in time, acquired three various designations, by no means indicative of the place where it is grown, but rather of the routes travelled by it in its western course, which have given rise to the familiar titles of Turkey, Russian, and China rhubarb. From the time of Marco Polo, rhubarb found its way over the barren steppes of Central Asia, by Yarkund, Kashgar, and Turkestan, to the Caspian and Black Seas (hence radix pontica or rha ponticum), or by a southern deflection from that route by Bokhara and Afghanistan, and thence down the Indus or the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea and Alexandria, and through Persia to Asia Minor. This was Turkey rhubarb. In 1653 China permitted Russia to trade on her frontiers, and the line of traffic was thenceforth diverted from the direct track to the Caspian and Black Seas farther north, taking its way from Tangut (now Kansuh) across the steppes of the high Gobi, and through Siberia to Moscow. In 1728 a line of custom-houses was established, and the Russian Government monopolised the trade until 1762, when it was again thrown open. The surveillance was exercised at tea-renowned Kiakhta. The rhubarb was carefully inspected, trimmed (to the profit of the Russian officials, doubt-

less), dried, and packed in chests, which were sewed up in linen, covered with hide, and pitched over. Once a year the drug was dispatched, but only in quantities of forty thousand pounds, by way of Lake Baikal and Irkutsk, to Moscow, to be there delivered to the Crown apothecaries, and in part to be sold to druggists. While the ports of China were rigidly closed to foreigners, the Russians enjoyed the lion's share of the rhubarb trade; but, on the opening of several ports in the north of China, the government of St. Petersburg saw the overland rhubarb trade menaced with extinction, and declared Kiakhta a free port, but these concessions came too late; the overland route was abandoned, and, in 1863, the Russian Rhubarb Office was abolished. During the Russian rule of the trade the rhubarb sent westward was, owing to the severe inspection, of the very finest quality, and was known to everybody to have come through Russia, but in this country it was always called Turkey rhubarb. Plenty of rhubarb is grown in England, France, and Germany, but commands a much lower price than the Chinese root. Rhubarb is a drug which depends very much on its good looks for a ready sale. Not only medicinal properties but appearance are required of it, especially in England. By-the-way, many readers of *ALL THE YEAR ROUND* may have seen from time to time itinerant vendors of Turkey rhubarb with a mighty stock of great genuine pieces on a barrow, and have marvelled at the low price which those humble followers of Esculapius were prepared to accept for their wares. Dropping into what is called a "rummage sale," or sale of unclaimed goods, the other day, I saw heaps on heaps of rhubarb utterly spoiled and useless, but still keeping up a brave appearance. This poor stuff is sold literally for what it will fetch, and the purchase of a cheap lot thus explains the occasional kerbstone traffic in rhubarb. While China sends us rhubarb, Cochin China and Siam contribute gamboge, a remedy which must be taken with discretion, and is perhaps better used as a pigment than as a medicine. The gamboge exhibited for sale is in sticks, showing the mark of the inside of the bamboo into which the gum, when liquid, was allowed to run. What is this pitchy stuff in barrels and boxes, in gourds, and in monkey-skins? Heaven save us! More physic! It is aloes, alack! and what a lot of it. Cases by scores, kegs by dozens, gourds by the

hundred—a wilderness of aloes: how ill everybody must be to want so much! This grewsome stuff comes hither from Socotra, from Barbadoes, and from Natal. That from Socotra is far the best in quality, and arrives at Zanzibar in a very soft state, packed in goat-skins, whence it is transferred to wooden boxes, in which it concretes into the black substance we are now sampling. In this connection I may observe that the drug aloes, the inspissated juice of the aloes plant—the substance now discussed—is totally distinct from the fragrant aloes mentioned in the Bible and other ancient writings. The latter, also called in Latin "*lignum aloës*," is a resinous wood, once valued everywhere for use as incense, but now esteemed only in the East. It is the substance mentioned by Maundrell as being used for that fumigation of beards, which conveyed a polite congé among the Turks of his day.

These drug warehouses and brokers' offices are very like life—the bitter preponderates terribly over the sweet, but some little sweetness is here notwithstanding. Passing by the samples of fragrant sandal-wood—used in China for incense and here for the extraction of essential oil—let us try the tamarinds, with their grateful sour-sweet taste, excellent to dispel the flavour of horrid rhubarb and still more detestable aloes; let us dally for a while over those bundles of slender yet sausage-like objects, like things one sees in a barber's shop, for they are sweet to the nostrils and grateful to the palate—vanilla pods, in ordinary language, but in that of Mincing-lane, "vanilloes;" "the Lane" rejoicing ever in a language of its own, not caring, for instance, for catechu as such, but resolving it into cutch and gambier. In like manner commerce troubles itself very little about the question recently raised by Mr. R. Clements Markham as to the correct spelling of that celebrated febrifuge, Peruvian bark. Mr. Markham may, if he be very persistent and very lucky, persuade the scientific world—which is well known to be free from prejudice, and always ready to welcome anybody who undertakes to set it right—to alter its spelling from cinchona to chinchona, but Mincing-lane will have none of this. It has been written in the books of Lewis and Peat as cinchona, and that spelling is followed in the Public Ledger, founded in 1759, and the oldest newspaper extant in London. So there is an end of

that matter; but for colloquial purposes it is "bark:" just "bark," and nothing more. Bark is a big thing nowadays. It is sold in tens, hundreds, and thousands of "serons." There is a bark trade, there are bark analysts, brokers, and merchants, and makers of bark into quinine — not forgetting its other alkaloids. The "serons," of which many around us are open, are made of the hide of the ox, doubled over into a kind of rough envelope, and packed tightly with bark, which varies greatly in value. In spite of the increasing use of cinchonidine, it may be safely said that the richness of any parcel of bark in quinine is the test of its value. Bark, therefore, is not usually bought by mere inspection. Samples are taken by intending bidders and submitted to analysts who have made bark analysis a special study, and it is by their report that biddings are guided. To be a shade more exact, the value depends on the percentage of quinine which will combine with sulphuric acid and form the white crystals known as the sulphate of quinine of commerce. For ages after the famous bark was introduced into Europe by the illustrious Ana de Osorio, Countess Chinchon and vice-queen of Peru, after whom the powdered bark was called "Countess's powder," fever patients were treated with infusions of the bark itself; but of late years practice has favoured the employment of the most potent principle, which it contains in sufficient quantity to be commercially valuable. The quinine extracted from the bark is now an important article of commerce, and is exported in immense quantities to Japan, and, in lesser proportion, to other countries. Albeit the manufacture of quinine is by no means confined to England, Mincing-lane is yet the great European mart for "bark," and German and French houses find it convenient to buy their raw material here. One part of the Fenchurch-street warehouses is filled with sarsaparilla root, packed in a curious cross between a "seron" and a bale—cylindrical—open at the sides, topped and bottomed with circular pieces of hide, sold afterwards for making drum-heads. Sarsaparilla comes from Jamaica, Honduras, Mexico, Guatemala, and Brazil, and is largely consumed as an infusion and in the form of a compound extract—unlike most wholesome drugs, very nice to take. There is, however, much difference of opinion as to its remedial virtues. None of this uncertainty hangs over the root which, not unlike

sarsaparilla in appearance, has yet a name — judging by recent American matches—almost impossible to spell in a hurry:

Coughing in a shady grove,  
Sat my Juliana;  
Lozenges I gave my love,  
Ipecacuanha.

It has long been used in this country as an expectorant, but, since its application to dysentery, in India, has increased rapidly in price, which has about quadrupled in the last twenty years. But we cannot delay much longer among the ipecacuanha roots, or we shall overlook many curious things, such as "dragon's blood," a resinous pigment of a splendid red colour, used in medicine as a colouring agent, in the arts for varnishes, and in necromancy as a potent spell. Burnt in the fire, while a proper incantation is pronounced, it is still supposed by no inconsiderable proportion of the British female population, to possess the property of bringing back to their feet an inconstant lover. Quite as interesting are the Calabar beans, used in their native country as an ordeal, and here as an ophthalmic medicine for contracting the pupil; belladonna, used for dilating the same; tonquin beans, met with in snuff-boxes; beeswax and vegetable wax; guaza or bhang, smoked and eaten in India, and used here as an anodyne and nervous stimulant; strychnine-bearing nux vomica; Chilian honey; orange peel in bags; liquorice-root in bales; saracenia, or pitcher-plant leaf, good for small-pox; jaborandi leaves, a new-fangled sudorific; roll annatto for colouring cheese; bales of camomiles and cases of shellac; Cocculus Indicus and grains of paradise, concerning the uses of which the less said in a beer-drinking country the better. The chemicals, representing the active principles of the drugs knocked down in the Commercial Sale Rooms, are rarely brought to the hammer, and must be sought of the wholesale drug merchants, such as Messrs. Cyriax and Farries, among whose stores may be found, in pure white crystals, such vigorous agents as monobromide of camphor, the last new sedative; atropine, the principle of belladonna; deadly strychnine and brucine; swift-slaying nicotine and costly cantharadine; fruit essences and fragrant oils. Nevertheless large quantities of essential oils, distilled from Indian grasses, are sold by auction, as are cod-liver oil and that curious product, iodine—samples of which are carefully kept



from the light. Drug sales—and there are many of them—succeed each other rapidly in Mincing-lane, for the brisk auctioneer allows no halting and no discussion, while “lots” containing within them the life and death of thousands are brought under the hammer.

## A CHARMING FELLOW.

BY FRANCES ELEANOR TROLLOPE.

AUTHOR OF “AUNT MARGARET’S TROUBLE,” “MABEL’S PROGRESS,” &c. &c.

### CHAPTER XXXI.

No Jupiter, rainy or thunderous, lent his assistance to account for the extraordinary phenomenon of Rhoda Maxfield’s driving up to the garden-gate of Ivy Lodge, instead of arriving there on foot. On the contrary, it was a fine autumn evening, with a serene sky where the sunset tints still lingered.

Rhoda alighted hurriedly from the carriage, and walked up the few feet of gravel path, between the garden fence and the house, with a beating heart. “You can go away now, Sally,” she said, being very anxious to dismiss the Blue Bell equipage before the door should be opened. But Sally was not in such a hurry. Her master had told her that she was to wait and see Miss Rhoda safe into the house, and then she might come back in the carriage as far as the Blue Bell. And Sally was not averse to have her new promotion to the dignity of “riding in a coach” witnessed by Mrs. Algernon Errington’s Polly, with whom she had a slight acquaintance. So Miss Maxfield’s equipage was seen by the servant who opened the door, and stared at from the front parlour window by two pairs of eyes, belonging respectively to Miss Chubb and Mrs. Errington.

“You can go into the parlour, miss,” said Polly. “Master and missis are still at dinner. But the old lady’s in there, and Miss Chubb.”

That they should be still at dinner, at half-past six o’clock in the evening, seemed a strange circumstance to Rhoda, and was one that she had not reckoned on. But she supposed it was according to the customs of the high folks Mrs. Algernon had been used to live among. The innovation was not accepted so meekly by most of the Whitfordians, whom, indeed, it seemed to irritate in a greater degree than more serious offences. But it is true of most of us, that we are never more angry than

when we are unable to explain the reasons for our anger.

“I am afraid I’m too early,” said Rhoda, when she had entered the parlour and greeted her old friends, “but father said he thought it was the right time to come.”

“Mr. and Mrs. Ancram Errington dine late, my dear. Castalia has not yet got broken of the habits of her own class, as I have had to be. Indeed, she will probably never need to relinquish them. But it is no matter, Rhoda. You can make yourself comfortable here with us for half an hour or so. Miss Chubb called in to see me at my place, and I brought her down here with me. I knew Mrs. Ancram Errington would be happy to see her if she dropped in, in an informal way.”

“I never can get used to the name of Ancram, instead of Algernon,” said the spinster, raising her round red face from her woolwork. “It isn’t half so pretty. Nine times out of ten, I call your son ‘Algy’ plump and plain. I’m very sorry if it’s improper, but I can’t help it.”

Mrs. Errington smiled with an air of lofty toleration. “Not at all improper,” she said. “Algernon is the last creature in the world to be distant towards an old friend. But as to the name of Ancram, why it was, from the first, his appellation among the Seelys. And Castalia always calls him so. You see, ‘Ancram’ was a familiar name in the circles she lived in; like Howard, or Seymour, or any of the great old family names, you know. It came naturally to her.”

“Well, I should think that one’s husband’s christian name would come natural to one, even if it were only plain Tom, Dick, or Harry.”

“He didn’t begin by being her husband, my dear!”

Rhoda had nestled herself down in a corner behind a small table, and was turning over an album and one or two illustrated annuals. She hoped that the discussion as to Algernon’s name would effectually divert the attention of the two elder ladies from the unprecedented fact that she had been brought to Ivy Lodge in a carriage. But she was not to be let off altogether. Miss Chubb, folding up her work, declared that it was growing too dark to distinguish the colours, and observed, “I was standing by the window, to catch the last daylight, when you drove up, Rhoda. I couldn’t think who it was, arriving in such style.”

"That was the Blue Bell fly you were in, Rhoda," said Mrs. Errington. "I believe it to be the same vehicle that my daughter-in-law uses occasionally. She complains of it sadly. But I tell her that she cannot expect to find her Aunt Seely's luxurious, well-hung carriages in a little provincial place like this."

Miss Chubb was about to make what she considered a severe retort, but she stifled it down. Mrs. Errington's airs were very provoking, to be sure; but there were reasons why Miss Chubb was more inclined to bear with her now than formerly. If it pleased this widowed mother to soften her disappointments about Algy's career and Algy's wife (it began to be considered in Whitford that both would prove to be failures!) by an extra flourish or two, why should any one put her—"No!" said Miss Chubb to herself, as the question was half-framed in her mind, "that is not the right word, certainly. I defy the world to put Mrs. Errington out of conceit with herself! But why should one snub and snap at the poor woman?"

Indeed, Miss Chubb never snapped, and rarely attempted to snub. She had a fund of benevolence hidden under a heap of frothy vanities and absurdities, like the solid cake at the bottom of a trifle.

"Well," said she, smiling good-temperedly, "I'm sure Rhoda doesn't quarrel with the Blue Bell fly, do you, Rhoda?"

"I shouldn't have wished to use it, myself, but father said, 'It is rather a long way,' and father thought—"

"Oh, my dear, there is no need to excuse yourself, or to look shy on the subject. We should all of us be glad enough of a coach to ride in, now and then, if we could afford it. I'm sure I should, and I don't mind saying so."

Mrs. Errington did not approve of the coach quite so unreservedly. She observed, with some solemnity, that she was no friend to extravagance; and that, above all things, persons ought to guard against ostentation, or a thrusting of themselves into positions unsuited to that station in life to which it had pleased Providence to call them. And, in conclusion, she announced her intention of availing herself of the circumstance that Rhoda had a carriage at her disposal for the evening, to drive back with her as far as Mrs. Thimbleby's door—"which," said she, "is only a street and a half away from your house, Rhoda; and it will not make

any difference to your father in point of expense."

Castalia found her three guests chatting in the twilight; or rather she found Mrs. Errington holding forth in her rich pleasant voice, whilst the others listened, and threw in a word or two now and then, just sufficient to show that they were attending to the good lady's harangue. In Rhoda's case, indeed, this appearance of attention was fallacious, for, although she said "Yes," and "No," and "Indeed!" at due intervals, her thoughts were wandering back to old days, which seemed suddenly to have receded into a far-distant past.

Castalia shook hands languidly with Miss Chubb and condescendingly with Rhoda. "I'm very glad you've come," she said to the latter, which was a speech of unusual warmth for her. And it had the merit, moreover, of being true. Castalia was not given to falsehood in her speech. She was too supercilious to care much what impression she made on people in general; and if they bored her, she took no pains to conceal the fact. Weariness of spirit and discontent had begun to assail her once more. They were old enemies. Her marriage had banished them for a time; but they gathered again, like clouds which a transient gleam of wintry sunshine has temporarily dispersed, and shadowed her life with an increasing gloom. This young Rhoda Maxfield offered some chance of brightness and novelty. She was certainly different from the rest of the Whitford world, and the pursuit of her society had been beset with some little difficulties that gave it zest.

A lamp was brought into the room, and then Castalia sat down beside Rhoda, unceremoniously leaving the other ladies to entertain each other as best they might. She examined her guest's dress; the quality of the lace frill at her throat; the arrangement of her chestnut curls; the delicate little gold chain that shone upon the pearl-grey gown; the neatly-embroidered letters R. M. worked on a corner of the handkerchief that lay in her lap, with as much unreserve and coolness as though Rhoda had been some daintily-furred rabbit, or any other pet animal. On her part, Rhoda took cognisance of every detail in Castalia's appearance, attire, and manner; she marked every inflection of her voice, and every turn of her haughty, languid head. And, perhaps, her scrutiny was the keener and more complete of the two, notwithstanding that



it was made with timidly-veiled eyes and downcast head.

"What an odd man your father is!" said the Honourable Mrs. Ancram Errington, by way of opening the conversation.

Rhoda found it impossible to reply to this observation. She coloured, and twisted her gold chain round her fingers, and was silent. But it did not seem that Mrs. Ancram Errington expected, or wished for a reply. She went on with scarcely a pause: "I thought at first he would refuse to let you come here. But he gave his consent at last. I was quite amused with his odd way of doing it, though. He must be quite a 'character.' He's very rich, isn't he?"

"I don't know, ma'am," stammered Rhoda.

"Well, he says so himself; or, at least, he informed me that you were, or would be, which comes to the same thing. And don't call me 'ma'am.' It makes me feel a hundred years old. You and I must be great friends."

"Where is Algernon?" asked Mrs. Errington from the other side of the room.

"He will come presently, when he has finished his wine. Do you know we found that stuff from the Blue Bell, that you recommended us to try, quite undrinkable! Ancram was obliged to get Jack Price to send him down a case of claret, from his own wine-merchant in town."

"Most extraordinary!" exclaimed Mrs. Errington, and began to recapitulate all the occasions on which the wine supplied to her from the Blue Bell Inn had been pronounced excellent by the first connoisseurs. But Castalia made small pretence of listening to or believing her statements. Indeed, I am sorry to say that obstinate incredulity was this young woman's habitual tone of mind with regard to almost every word that her mother-in-law uttered; whereby the Honourable Mrs. Castalia occasionally fell into mistakes.

"Could you not try Dr. Bodkin's wine-merchant?" suggested Miss Chubb. "I am no judge myself, but I feel sure that the doctor would not put bad wine on his table."

"Oh, I don't know. I don't suppose there is any first-rate wine to be got in this place. Ancram prefers dealing with the London man."

And then Castalia dismissed the subject with an expressive shrug. "Who are your chief friends here?" she asked of Rhoda,

who had sat with her eyes fixed on a smart illustrated volume, scarcely seeing it, and feeling a confused sort of pain and mortification, at the tone in which the younger Mrs. Errington treated the elder.

"My chief friends?"

"Yes; you must know a great many people. You have lived here all your life, have you not?"

"Yes; but—father never cared that I should make many acquaintances out of doors."

"You were Methodists, were you not? I remember Ancram telling me of the psalm-singing that used to go on downstairs. He can imitate it wonderfully. Do tell me about how you lived, and what you did! I never knew any Methodists, nor any people who kept a shop."

The naïve curiosity with which this was said might have moved some minds to mirth, and others to indignation. In Rhoda it produced only confusion and distress, and such an access of shyness as made her for a few moments literally dumb. She murmured at length some unintelligible sentences, of which "I'm sure I don't know" were the only words that Castalia could make out. She did not on this account desist from her inquiries, but threw them into the more particular form of a catechism, as, "Were you let to read anything except the Bible on Sundays?" "I suppose you never went to a ball in your life?" "How did you learn to do your own hair?" "Do the Methodist preachers really rant and shriek as much as people say?"

Algernon, coming quietly into the room, beheld his wife and Rhoda seated side by side on a sofa behind the little Pembroke table, and engaged, apparently, in confidential conversation. They were so near together, and Castalia was bending down so low to hear Rhoda's faintly uttered answers, as to give an air of intimacy to the group. He lingered in the doorway looking at them, until Miss Chubb crying, "Oh, there you are, sir!" called the attention of the others to him, when he advanced and shook hands with Rhoda, whose fingers were icy cold as he touched them with his warm, white, exquisitely cared-for hand. Then he bent to kiss his mother, and seated himself between her and his old friend Miss Chubb, in a low chair, stretching out his legs, and leaning back his head, as he contemplated the neatly-shod feet that were carelessly crossed in front of him.

"You did not expect to see Rhoda, did you, my dear boy?" said Mrs. Errington.

"Yes; I believe Castalia said something about having asked her. It is a new freak of Castalia's. I think she had better have left it alone. The old man is highly impracticable, and is just one of those persons whom it is prudent to keep at arm's length."

"I think so too!" assented Mrs. Errington, emphatically. "Indeed, I almost wonder at his letting his daughter come here."

Algernon quite wondered at it. But he said nothing.

"Of course," pursued Mrs. Errington, "letting her come to me is a very different matter."

"Why?" asked Miss Chubb, bluntly.

"Because, my dear, the girl herself is so devotedly attached to me that I believe she would fret herself into an illness if she were forbidden to see me occasionally. And I believe old Maxfield is fond of his child, in his way, and would not wish to grieve her. But, of course, Rhoda can have no particular desire to visit Castalia. Indeed, I have offered to bring her more than once, and she has not availed herself of the opportunity."

"Old Max is ambitious for his daughter, they say," observed Miss Chubb, "and likes to get her into genteel company. Perhaps he thinks she will find a husband out of her own sphere. I'm told that old Max is quite rich, and that she will have all his money. But I think Rhoda is pretty enough to get well married, even without a fortune."

Then, when Mrs. Errington moved away to speak to her daughter-in-law, Miss Chubb whispered slyly to Algernon, "You were a little bit smitten with our pretty Rhoda, once upon a time, sir, weren't you? Oh, it's no use your protesting and looking so unconscious! La, dear me, well it was very natural! Calf-love, of course. But I'll tell you, between you and me, who is smitten with her, and pretty seriously too—and that's Mr. Diamond!"

"Diamond!"

"Well, you needn't look so astonished. He's a young man, for all his grave ways, and she is a pretty girl. And, upon my word, I think it might do capitally."

"You look tired, Algernon," said Mrs. Errington to her son a little later in the evening. It must have been a very marked expression of fatigue which could have

attracted the good lady's attention in any other human being.

"Oh, I've been bored and worried at that confounded post-office."

"What a shame!" cried Mrs. Errington. "Positively some representation ought to be made to Government about it."

"Oh, it's disgusting!" said Castalia, with a shrug of her lean shoulders, and in the fretful drawl, which conveyed the idea that she would be actively angry, if any subliminary matters could be important enough to overcome her habitual languor.

"I don't remember hearing that Mr. Cooper found the work so hard," said Miss Chubb, innocently. Mr. Cooper had been the Whitford postmaster next before Algernon.

"It isn't the work, Miss Chubb," said Algernon, a little ashamed of the amount of sympathy and compassion his words had evoked. "That is to say, it is not the quantity of the work, but the kind of it, that bores one. Cooper, I believe, was a steady, jog-trot old fellow, who did his daily task like a horse in a mill. But I can't take to it so comfortably. It is as if you, with your taste for elegant needle-work, were set to hem dusters all day long!" Algernon laughed, in his old, frank way, as he made the comparison.

"Well, I shouldn't like that, certainly. But, after all, dusters are very useful things. And then, you see, I do the fancy work to amuse myself; but I should be paid for the dusters, and that makes a difference!"

"Paid!" screamed Castalia. "Why you don't imagine that Ancram's twopenny salary can pay him! Good gracious, it seems to me scarcely enough to buy food with. It's quite horrible to think how poor we are!"

"Come," said Algernon, "I don't think this conversation is particularly lively or entertaining. Suppose we change the subject. There is Rho—Miss Maxfield looking as if she expected to see us all expire of inanition on the spot!"

And, in truth, Rhoda was gazing from one to the other with a pale, distressed face, and a look of surprise and compassion in her soft brown eyes.

Mrs. Errington did not approve of her daughter-in-law's unscrupulous confession of poverty. Castalia lacked the Ancram gift of embellishing disadvantageous circumstances. And the elder lady took occasion to remark to Miss Chubb that everything was comparative; and that

means which might appear ample to persons of inferior rank were very trivial and inadequate in the eyes of the Honourable Mrs. Ancram Errington. "She has been her uncle's pet for many years. My lord denied her nothing. And I needn't tell you, my dear Miss Chubb, that the emoluments of Algernon's official post are by no means the whole and sole income of our young couple here. There are private resources"—here Mrs. Errington waved her hands majestically, as though to indicate the ample nature of the resources—"which, to many persons, would seem positive affluence. But Castalia's measure is a high one. I scold her sometimes, I assure you. 'My dear child,' I say to her, 'look at me! Bred amidst the feudal splendours of Ancram Park, I have accommodated myself to very different scenes and very different associates;' for, of course, my dear soul, although I have a great regard for my Whitford friends, and am very sensible of their kind feelings for me, yet, as a mere matter of fact, it would be absurd to pretend that the society I now move in is equal, in point of rank, to that which surrounded my girlish years. And then Castalia's perhaps partial estimate of her husband's talents (you know she has witnessed the impression they made in the most brilliant circles of the Metropolis) makes her impatient of his present position. For myself, feeling sure, as I do, that this Post-office business is merely temporary, I can look at matters with more philosophy."

"Ouf!" panted Miss Chubb, and began to fan herself with her pocket-handkerchief.

"Anything the matter, Miss Chubb?" asked Algernon, raising his eyebrows and looking at her with a smile.

"Nothing particular, Algy. I find it a little oppressive, that's all."

"This little room is so stuffy with more than two or three people in it!" said Castalia.

"I'll do my part towards making it less stuffy," said Miss Chubb, jumping up, and beginning to shake hands all round. "I daresay my old Martha is there. I told her to come for me at nine o'clock. Oh, never mind, thank you," in answer to Castalia's suggestion that she should stay and have a cup of coffee, which would be brought in presently. "Never mind the coffee. I have no doubt I shall find a bit of supper ready at home." And with that she departed.

"I hope it wasn't too severe, that hit about the supper," said the good little woman to herself, as she trotted homeward, accompanied by the faithful Martha. "But, really—offering one a cup of coffee at nine o'clock at night! And as to Mrs. Errington, I am sorry for her, and can make allowances for her; but she did so go beyond all bounds to-night that, if I had not come away when I did, I think I should have choked."

"Is the little woman affronted at anything?" asked Algernon of his wife, when Miss Chubb's footsteps had ceased to be heard pattering down the gravel path outside the house.

"Eh? What little woman? Oh, the Chubb? No; I don't know. I suppose not."

"No, no; not at all," said Mrs. Errington, decisively. "But you know her ways of old. She has no *savoir faire*. A good little creature, poor soul! Oh, by-the-way, Castalia, you know the patterns for autumn mantles you asked me to look at? Well, I went into Ravell and Sarsnet's yesterday, and they told me—" And then the worthy matron and her daughter-in-law entered into an earnest discussion in an undertone; the common interest in autumn mantles supplying that "touch of nature" which made them kin more effectually than the matrimonial alliance that united their families.

"I'm afraid you must have had a very dull evening," said the master of the house, looking down on Rhoda as he stood near her, leaning with his back against the tiny mantelshelf.

"No, thank you."

"I'm afraid you must! There was no amusement for you at all."

"My evenings are not generally very amusing. I daresay you, who have been accustomed to such different things, would find them very dull."

This was not the humble, simple, childlike Rhoda whom he had parted from two years ago. It was not that she had now no humility or simplicity, but the humility was mingled with dignity, the simplicity with an easier grace. Rhoda was more self-possessed at this moment than she had been all the evening before. The weakest creatures are not without some means of self-defence; and, if she be but pure-hearted, the most inexperienced girl in the world can put on an armour of maiden pride over her hurt feelings, that has been known to puzzle even very in-

telligent individuals of the opposite sex; and has perhaps given rise to one or two of the numerous impassioned complaints that have been uttered from time to time, as to the inscrutable duplicity of women. In like manner, if a man scalds his finger, or gets a bullet in his flesh, he endeavours to bear the pain without screaming.

So little Rhoda Maxfield sat there with a placid face, talking to her old love, turning over the leaves of a picture-book, and scarcely looking at him as she talked.

Now, if Algernon had been consulted beforehand as to what line of conduct he would wish Rhoda to adopt when they should meet, he would, doubtless, have said, "Let us meet pleasantly and frankly as old friends, and, behave as if all our old love-making had been the mere amusement of our childhood!" And yet, somehow, it a little disconcerted him to see her so calm.

"You—don't you—don't you go out much in the evening?" he said, feeling (to his own surprise) considerably at a loss what to say.

"Go out much in the evening? No, indeed; where should I go to?" Rhoda actually gave a little laugh as she answered him.

"Oh, I thought my mother mentioned that you were a good deal at the Bodkins."

"Yes; I go to see Miss Minnie sometimes. They are all very good to me."

"And my mother says, too, that you are growing quite a blue-stocking! You have lessons in French, and music, and I don't know what besides."

"Father can afford to have me taught now, and so I have begun to learn a few of the things that girls are taught when they are little children, if they happen to be the children of gentlefolks," answered Rhoda, with considerable spirit.

"I'm sure there is no reason why you should not learn them."

"I hope not. But, of course, I am clumsy, and shall never succeed so well as if I had begun earlier. I am getting very old, you know!"

"Oh, very old, indeed! Your birthday, I remember, falls——" he checked himself with a sudden recollection of the last

birthday he had spent with Rhoda, and of the bunch of late roses he had been at the pains to procure for her on that occasion from the gardener at Pudcombe Hall. And, on the whole, he felt positively relieved when Slater came to announce, with her chronic air of resentful gentility, that "Miss Maxfield's young woman was waiting for her in the hall."

"And are you off too, mother?" he asked.

"Yes, my dear Algernon. I am going to drive home with Rhoda."

"Drive! Oh, so you are indulging in the extravagance of a fly, madam! I am glad of it, though you did give me a lecture on the subject of economy only last week!"

"You know that I always do, and always did, disapprove of extravagance, Algernon. A genteel economy is compatible with the highest breeding. But—the fact is, that Rhoda has a coach to go home in, and I'm about to take advantage of it."

There was something in the situation which Algernon felt to be embarrassing, as he gave his arm to his mother to lead her to the carriage. But Mrs. Errington had at least one quality of a great lady—she was not easily disconcerted. She marched majestically down the garden path, entered the vehicle which old Max's money was to pay for, with an air of proprietorship, and invited Rhoda to take her place beside her with a most condescending wave of the hand.

"You must come again soon," Castalia had said to her new acquaintance when they bade each other "Good night."

But Algernon did not support his wife's invitation by a single word, though he smiled very persistently as he stood bare-headed in the moonlight, watching his mother and Rhoda drive away.

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